

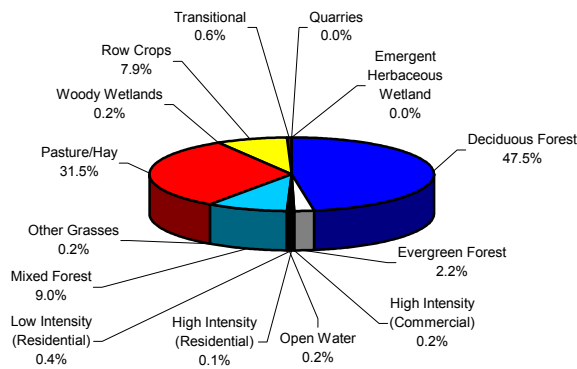
Summary – Lower Elk River

In 1996, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Division of Water Pollution Control adopted a watershed approach to water quality. This approach is based on the idea that many water quality problems, like the accumulation of point and nonpoint pollutants, are best addressed at the watershed level. Focusing on the whole watershed helps reach the best balance among efforts to control point sources of pollution and polluted runoff as well as protect drinking water sources and sensitive natural resources such as wetlands. Tennessee has chosen to use the USGS 8-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC-8) as the organizing unit.

The Watershed Approach recognizes awareness that restoring and maintaining our waters requires crossing traditional barriers (point vs. nonpoint sources of pollution) when designing solutions. These solutions increasingly rely on participation by both public and private sectors, where citizens, elected officials, and technical personnel all have opportunities to participate. The Watershed Approach provides the framework for a watershed-based and community-based approach to address water quality problems.

Chapter 1 of the Lower Elk River Watershed Water Quality Management Plan discusses the Watershed Approach and emphasizes that the Watershed Approach is not a regulatory program or an EPA mandate; rather it is a decision-making process that reflects a common strategy for information collection and analysis as well as a common understanding of the roles, priorities, and responsibilities of all stakeholders within a watershed. Traditional activities like permitting, planning and monitoring are also coordinated in the Watershed Approach.

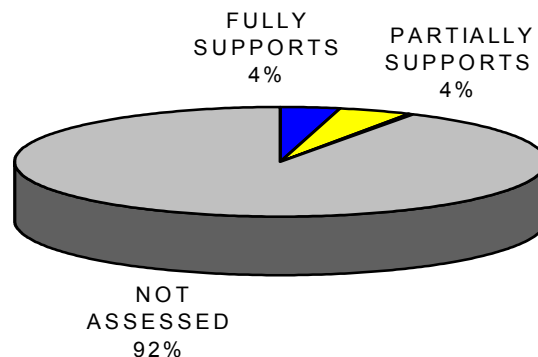
A detailed description of the watershed can be found in Chapter 2. The Tennessee portion of the Lower Elk River Watershed is approximately 715 square miles and includes parts of four Middle Tennessee counties. A part of the Lower Tennessee River drainage basin, the watershed has 1,117 stream miles.



Land Use in the Tennessee Portion of the Lower Elk River Watershed is based on MRLC Satellite Imagery.

Many local interpretive areas are common in the Lower Elk River Watershed, most notably, Giles County Park and Sam Davis Park. Eleven rare plant and animal species have been documented in the watershed, including two rare fish species, one rare mussel species, and one rare snail species. Portions of one stream in the Lower Elk River Watershed are listed in the National Rivers Inventory as having one or more outstanding natural or cultural values.

A review of water quality sampling and assessment is presented in Chapter 3. Using the Watershed Approach to Water Quality, 15 sampling sites were utilized in the Lower Elk River Watershed. These were ambient or watershed monitoring sites. Monitoring results support the conclusion that 50% of the assessed streams fully support designated uses.



Water Quality Assessment in the Tennessee Portion of the Lower Elk River Watershed is Based on the 1998 303(d) List.

Also in Chapter 3, a series of maps illustrate Overall Use Support in the watershed, as well as Use Support for the individual uses of Fish and Aquatic Life Support, Recreation, Irrigation, and Livestock Watering and Wildlife. Another series of maps illustrate streams that are listed for impairment by specific causes (pollutants) such as Pathogens, Habitat Alteration and Siltation.

Point and Nonpoint Sources are addressed in Chapter 4, which is organized by HUC-10 subwatersheds. Maps illustrating the locations of STORET monitoring sites and USGS stream gauging stations are presented in each subwatershed.



HUC-10 Subwatersheds in the Tennessee portion of the Lower Elk River Watershed.

Point source contributions to the Lower Elk River Watershed consist of three individual NPDES-permitted facilities, two of which discharge into streams that have been listed on the 1998 303(d) list. Other point source permits in the watershed are Aquatic Resource Alteration Permits (195), Tennessee Multi-Sector Permits (17) and Mining Permits (1). Agricultural operations include cattle, chicken, hog, and sheep farming. Maps illustrating the locations of NPDES and ARAP permit sites are presented in each subwatershed.

Chapter 5 is entitled *Water Quality Partnerships in the Lower Elk River Watershed* and highlights partnerships between agencies and between agencies and landowners that are essential to success. Programs of federal agencies (Natural

Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Tennessee Valley Authority), and state agencies (TDEC Division of Community Assistance, TDEC Division of Water Supply, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Alabama Department of Environmental Management) are summarized. Local initiatives of active watershed organizations (Friends of the Elk River) are also described.

Point and Nonpoint source approaches to water quality problems in the Lower Elk River Watershed are addressed in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 also includes comments received during public meetings, along with an assessment of needs for the watershed.

The full Lower Elk River Watershed Water Quality Management Plan can be found at: <http://www.state.tn.us/environment/wpc/watershed/wsmplans/>.